

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An automated optical system comprising a camera adapted to provide an operator with an image of a damaged portion of an item being inspected, and a light source adapted to illuminate a portion of the item being inspected such that the illuminated portion identifies the location of the damaged portion, and is visible from outside the automated optical system to the naked eye of an observer looking at the item being inspected.
2. The automated optical system of claim 1 wherein the system comprises a marking mechanism adapted to mark the item being inspected in a manner which identifies the location of the damaged portion of the item as well as the type of damage contained in the damaged portion of the item.
3. The automated optical system of claim 2 wherein the item being inspected is sufficiently exposed to allow an observer to manually mark the item being inspected.
4. The automated optical system of claim 3 wherein the light source is a low power laser.
5. A method for identifying a defect in an item comprising:
providing an item to be examined;
utilizing an automated detection method to identify a potential defect in the item;
marking the item in a manner which identifies the area of the item containing the defect, and
in a manner which indicates the type of action required to correct the defect.
6. The method of claim 5 wherein, prior to marking the item, the item is visually inspected to verify that the potential defect is an actual defect.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein marking the item is done manually.
8. The method of claim 7 wherein a light source is used to identify the area to be marked.
9. The method of claim 8 wherein the light source comprises a low power laser.

11. A method for identifying a defect in an item comprising:

providing an automated optical system having a camera adapted to provide an operator with an image of a damaged portion of an item being inspected, and a laser light source adapted to illuminate a portion of the item being inspected such that the illuminated portion identifies the location of the damaged portion, and is visible from outside the automated optical system to the naked eye of an observer looking at the item being inspected;

providing an item to be examined an placing it in the provided automated optical system;

utilizing the provided automated optical system to identify a potential defect in the item;

visually inspecting the item to verify that the potential defect is an actual defect;

manually marking the item in a manner which identifies the area of the item containing the defect, and in a manner which indicates the type of action required to correct the defect.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein providing an automated optical system comprises taking an existing automated optical system and coupling a low power laser to a camera of the automated optical system as the laser light source adapted to illuminate a portion of the item being inspected.

13. A method of modifying an automated optical system which includes a camera portion, the method comprising fastening a low power laser to the camera such that the laser, when turned on, provides a visual indication of the location of an area which is currently within the field of view of the camera.